

2008 Legislative Session Review

Rep. Judy Warnick * 13th District



Rep. Judy Warnick

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Committees

Local Government (new)

Transportation (new)

Judiciary

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I would like to begin this letter by recognizing and thanking the Department of Transportation crews who worked so hard to keep the passes and roads open and safe through our recent long, white winter. Thanks to them, I was able to come home on some of the weekends during session. We can really appreciate what their work means for keeping commerce flowing through the state.

The 2008 legislative session ended March 13, and it is good to be home again. More than 1,700 bills were introduced in this 60-day session and we passed more than 300 out of the House and Senate. In this newsletter I will discuss some of the highlights and major legislation that affects our district.

I was proud to vote for legislation which expands career and technical education programs in the state. We all know how important it is to fill our workforce with young talent. We need more opportunities for students who aren't making plans for college. This legislation will give them the motivation to finish high school and begin in trades in which they can excel.

At the end of March, I attended two open houses with the Department of Ecology on a draft agreement regarding exempt wells in Kittitas County. Clearly it's important for us to have the facts before making a precedent-setting decision. Rep. Hinkle and I secured \$683,000 from the state to fund a groundwater study. It is our hope that with more knowledge we can make better decisions. Thanks to all of you who have remained involved in this issue.

I have been appointed to two work groups during the interim: the Boeing Competitiveness Task Force and the Freight Investment Study Group. The work of both of these groups will be important for our area, as Moses Lake has benefitted from Boeing flight testing and the many important rail lines that run through our communities. I'm looking forward to representing the people of the 13th District even though session is complete for the year.

In your service,

Judy Warnick

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AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND USE

A foreshadow of things to come: expanding the Growth Management Act (GMA)

I voted “no” against a proposal attempting to expand the GMA. Senate Bill 6580 would create up to nine pilot programs around the state to plan for climate change. Local jurisdictions in the programs would be given grants and tools through the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. These could include computer modeling and climate-change response methodology, among other things, with the assumption that the tools would be used by local jurisdictions in their comprehensive planning process under the GMA.

We’re setting ourselves up for an expansion of the GMA, and I feel uneasy the Legislature would not be able to review mandates that are being created for local government. Language in the bill makes it clear that the state intends to expand requirements under the GMA.

People in rural areas are the best caretakers of our air, land and water, because they not only spend the most time outdoors, they live off the land. Without good, sustainable land, their livelihoods are in danger. Our district leaves a very small carbon footprint with the many alternative energy sources we have, including: water, wind and solar power.

Even now the GMA adds expensive requirements that are difficult for our communities. Local residents have not asked for this bill and they certainly understand the importance of taking care of our environment and natural resources.

I sent Gov. Gregoire a letter requesting that she veto a part of the bill in order to prevent unintended consequences of the act, reducing litigation risks and the duplication of efforts. Unfortunately, the governor signed the bill with that section included.



The Wild Horse Canyon wind farm in Kittitas County.

I was proud to see Ellensburg resident Linda Schantz testify before the Local Government Committee on Jan. 25. She told committee members the state has interfered and created too many mandates under the GMA without helping local citizens. She encouraged the use of incentives to reduce greenhouse gases, rather than mandates and legal challenges.



State to investigate recreational opportunities on state lands

I’ve seen how our growing population has decreased the amount of land that can be used by the public for outdoor activities. There are so many great opportunities in this state for fishing, horseback riding, using off-road vehicles, hunting and snowmobiling. Tax dollars are used to maintain and protect these lands, so taxpayers should reap the benefits of their investments.

I co-sponsored a bill that would study the current use of our public lands, and where we may have opportunities for additional recreational activities. Obtaining more, accurate information will help us understand the next steps we could take.

The bill was signed into law by the governor at the end of March.

Commission for hunters and fishers with disabilities made permanent

The bill I sponsored to make permanent the work of the Fish & Wildlife Commission Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities passed the Legislature. The commission sets rules for hunters and fishers with disabilities, giving them more opportunities to pursue their hobbies while staying safe. Committee testimony displayed the success and importance of the commission.

The governor signed the bill into law April 1. This legislation was so important even though it may not involve a lot of people. But for those that it affects, it means a lot. I’m so happy for these folks that the important work of the commission will continue indefinitely.

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TRANSPORTATION

As a new member to the House Transportation Committee, I had a lot to learn about how projects are funded, the importance of ferries to Western Washington and the direction we're taking. After all was said and done, I voted "no" on the transportation budget. I feel that the budget broke some promises and was not smart policy as it forces the state to borrow money against itself to pay for the projects that are included.

Transportation was a hot issue at the town halls Rep. Hinkle and I hosted in February. Folks were most concerned about Senate Bill 6900, a measure that would have required car and truck owners to pay an expensive annual tax based on the size of their vehicle's engine. This would really hurt people who depend on trucks and large equipment for their livelihoods. Fortunately, the bill never passed out of committee, so it is dead. Unfortunately, the sponsor indicated he would bring the bill back. As a farm girl, I will fight fervently against this terrible policy.

Others at the town hall meetings asked about the prospect of tolls on I-90 (very little on our side of the mountains) and how multimodal transportation could work in our communities (it would have to be well thought-out and require the local communities to work closely together). Clearly transportation issues are on your mind, and I'm glad to work on these issues for you.

PUBLIC SAFETY

One of the great successes in this year's session was the passage on the anti-gang bill. House Bill 2712 creates definitions for gangs, gang members and gang crimes. It also creates a statewide gang database which would help law enforcement officials share information; increases sentencing for adults who recruit juveniles to commit gang crimes; provides money to aid local jurisdictions with graffiti removal; and provides funding for increased law enforcement resources.



The legislation will be just the start for communities who are torn apart by gang violence. I'm excited with what we started this year and what we can do next year.



Department of Transportation crews and the Washington State Patrol work to clear roads for thousands of drivers and freight trucks who use Snoqualmie Pass every day.



Rep. Warnick with Ray Towry, Ephrata recreation and public relations director, and Wes Craig, Ephrata city administrator. Warnick, Towry and Craig watched as Gov. Gregoire signed a public works budget which included \$6.6 million for critical water and road improvements in Ephrata.

The bill was signed into law March 31 and will take effect in July.

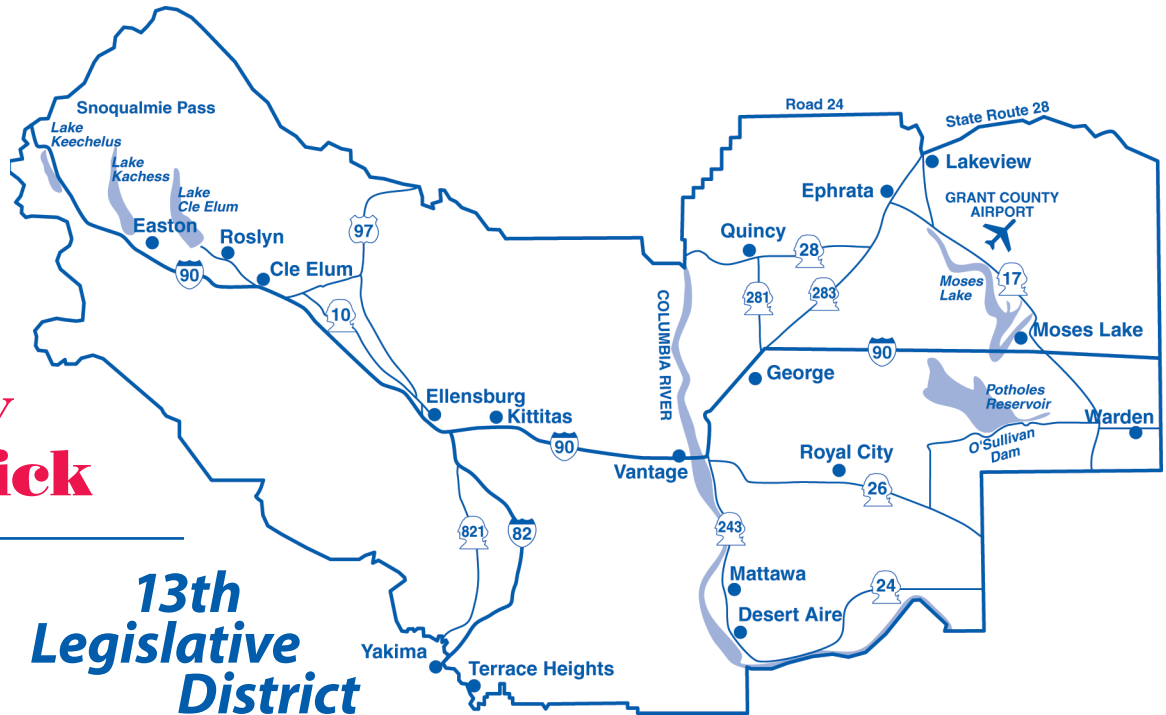
Another public safety win came with several bills addressing sex offenders. House Bill 2786 increases community notification of sex offenders and House Bill 2713 creates a statewide DNA database for sex offenders and felons. These are important to keeping our families and communities safer. The governor signed both bills at the end of March.

I'm disappointed House Bill 2440 did not pass. This bill would have required Global Positioning System monitoring of the most dangerous sex offenders, allowing law enforcement to know exactly where offenders are and have been. With 1,400 sex offenders "missing" in our state, we can't afford to not invest in knowing where they are.

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